The staff of the information center is the key to the quality of the information services it will provide. A center's staff can be divided into three levels — information professionals, technical assistants, and clerical assistants. It is important that administrators in the organization understand the level of service that can reasonably be expected from each of these employees. The training and background of the staff determine whether a library is simply a storage area or an effective provider of information services.

The Librarian/Director or Information Professional

Although *information professional* or *information specialist* may be a more apt description, *librarian* is a commonly used title for the person who heads an information center.   In fact, the term "information professional" may inadvertently introduce confusion. This is because it is sometimes used for individuals in the area of computer science or management information systems as well as for those in the area of library information services. It is the latter which is being discussed here.

The director in charge of an information center needs to be:
  * creative
  * energetic and enthusiastic
  * attentive to detail
  * oriented to customer service
  * comfortable with hi-tech equipment
  * well-organized with strong administrative skills
  * familiar with computerized library systems

The director has two major roles. One is related to *planning* for the center. The other is *overseeing the routine tasks* that ensure smooth operation. Many of the routine tasks can be delegated to an assistant so that the director can focus on the more complex issues of planning and providing services to meet the needs of priority users.

It is recommended that the director hold a degree from an American Library Association accredited Masters of Library/Information Sciences (MLS) program. S/he should have both organizational and interpersonal skills

If funding is not available to hire a professional librarian, it is strongly advised that arrangements be made to secure regular consultation on reference and technical processes with a professional librarian. This is important not only at the point of organizing the center and developing its basic procedures, but also to assist in reviewing its on-going operations and in assessing problems which may arise, or to help identify problems of which the staff may not be aware. In the longer term, however, consultations are unlikely to be a satisfactory sub-

stitute for an on-site professional librarian/director.

Initial Tasks.
There are several key tasks, outlined below, that fall to the director as part of the process of organizing an information center. The director will need to:

> **A center's services must become vital to the daily functions of the organization.**

1. Identify the Targeted Users and Determine Their Special Needs.
Include interested high-level administrators and others in the organization as well as specific groups whom these administrators wish to serve.

Information services are rarely given budgetary priorities if their activities are not vital to the daily running of the organization. Don't wait to be asked! Think about ways the value of the information center can be demonstrated to the administration and regularly pass along a relevant newspaper clipping, an abstract from a journal article, or the table of contents of an interesting book.

Be sensitive to individual reading habits. Some people do not like to receive unsolicited information – anything sent to them should have high relevance, be one page or less, and be sent at infrequent intervals.

Meet with targeted users to decide what resources should be available in the center and what services should be provided. Become aware of the special needs and concerns of different parts of the organization and the community. Targeted users will begin to learn about the center, even before it opens.

2. Set Goals for the Center.
For goals to be useful measures, they need to be considered in terms of specific behaviors or measurable outcomes. By way of example, goals for the center might include —

* Talking to five potential new users a month about the center.
* Talking to one local expert on alcohol and other drug abuse each week.
* Developing within one year a brochure describing the center.
* Contacting selected alcohol and drug organizations at least once a year.
* Building a collection of x number of books and reports within one year.
* Collecting information on x topics within one year.

In addition, the director will need to make decisions about:

* Use of space – how should the materials be housed so that information can be readily found?
* Furniture and equipment that the center will require – this includes diverse issues such as identifying items obtainable from within the organization and preparing a list of items to be purchased.
* Selection of computer hardware and software.
* Selection of cataloging and classification systems.
* Circulation policies – should the use of some materials be restricted to

use in the center? Documents that are frequently used, expensive, or difficult to replace and notavailable for loan constitute the center's *Reference Collection*. For books or other documents that are available for loan, what is a reasonable loan period? What circulation system will be adopted or developed to keep track of materials that have been borrowed by users? How will overdue materials be handled?

3. Create a Manual of Policies and Procedures.
The director must establish the center's policies and rules. Policies refer to the general guidelines or rules that guide the center's activities. In contrast, procedures represent the exact steps involved in attending to the day-to-day tasks of the center – a basic guide of the "how-to."

The policy statement setting forth the general rules for the center's activities would spell out, for example, the kinds of materials the collection encompasses and its priorities in terms of users. By way of example, one policy might state that the information center collects materials published in English and Spanish but not materials in other languages. Another policy might state who will be allowed to borrow what materials and for how long. A policy manual should be prepared which sets forth in clear, step-by-step detail how the center will undertake different, discrete tasks such as: selecting, ordering, processing, and recording the arrival of materials.

Additional topics for the policy and procedure manual may include:
  * Introduction: include a statement of the center's relationship to the host organization and the services it provides.
  * Job descriptions: include volunteers as well as staff positions.
  * Role and functions of the advisory group: describe its composition.
  * Samples of reports and key documents.
  * Details of agreements between the center and cooperating libraries and commercial services.

Since there are inevitable changes and additions to any set of procedures, it is suggested that the manual be assembled in a loose-leaf format.

4. Identify Resources on Alcohol and Other Drugs.
Resources may include books, reports, videos, posters, and more. Experts in the immediate community, the region, or the country may also be considered resources for the information center. Finally, groups and organizations with a special interest in alcohol and drug issues should also be identified.

5. Develop Contacts.
The director should be an active member of the sponsoring organization. In particular, as an expert on information identification and dissemination, it is suggested that the director serve on "in-house" committees in addition to working closely with special projects. It is also important to create and nurture contacts with other professionals and organizations. Information centers are

most effective and efficient when they are familiar with their counterparts elsewhere and when they interact to forge a network benefiting all of their members.

6. Select an Advisory Group.
An advisory body can help the center in multiple ways. One is by reviewing policies and materials. It can provide guidance and feedback to the director in respect to the needs of target users. An advisory group can also be an advocate for the center. Advisory groups that function well are those whose members are genuinely interested in the center's efforts and goals. The group should represent a diversity of expertise, which might range from information specialists to those informed of the needs of targeted users, those with special expertise in the area of alcohol and other drugs, or those with skills in business and management.

Routine Tasks of the Director.
Routine tasks of the director can be divided into three areas: administrative tasks, technical tasks, and user service/relations tasks.

Administrative Tasks.
Include all of those activities which are central to oversight of the daily tasks. Examples:
* Attention to procedures necessary to keep the center in order and the information up-to-date.
* Establishing and monitoring budgets – includes a variety of activities such as selecting vendors for book purchases and supplies.
* Supervision and training of personnel, both paid staff and volunteers.

Technical Tasks.
Include overseeing services which are essential to underpin the center's operations. Examples:
* Knowing that the selections and acquisitions for the center correspond with its written policy.
* Knowing that the selected classification cataloging system is resulting in a usable and searchable collection.
* Knowing the problems encountered in identifying and obtaining relevant information.
* Developing procedures for handling classification, processing, and organizing of materials.

If the director is not professionally trained, opportunities to learn some of the specialized skills needed to run the many systems vital to information centers should be sought. These may appear as short courses offered by *SALIS* or *CSAP* for RADAR centers, or through local organizations of librarians (often chapters of the American Library Association or the Special Libraries Association) or even informal arrangements with public or special librarians in the area.

User Service/Relations Tasks.
Include overseeing all aspects of user satisfaction, including responding to correspondence from users. A major portion of this work may be the provision of reference services if the center has no other staff to perform this very important work.

This area also encompasses a diversity of activities undertaken both to promote awareness of the center and promote its use. It is important to look at the administrative and technical routines as they are viewed by the user.

Preparing an Annual Report.
An annual report may not be required by the sponsoring organization. However, even if that is the case, preparation of an annual report can be a useful activity. For one, it forces — or provides the opportunity for — the director to reflect on the center's activities. When one is preoccupied with day-to-day concerns, it's very easy to lose sight of the big picture.

An annual report is also a useful vehicle for keeping others informed about the information center. Be sure to send a copy to the head of the funding agency. Such a report provides that individual with a clear picture of the information center's activities. It also conveys information that can be used to represent the center, as well as to justify increasing or continuing funding and to assess the value of the center to the larger organization and community.

The annual report should include an introductory statement of objectives, as well as a summary of the year's activities: statistics that capture the efforts of the center for the year (see *Section 7*), a review of the budget, a description of professional development activities, updates on changes in staffing and equipment, and a statement of future plans.

Library Technician   A library technician is a key staff member in an information center.   The ability of a center to provide timely information is dependent upon very careful attention to details so that materials can be quickly located. For example, if something is misfiled, it may physically be in the center but, for all practical purposes, it is lost. Trying to find it is equivalent to looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

The library technician is the staff person responsible for many of these tasks. S/he is trained in the technical procedures essential to the center's smooth operation. With minimum supervision, the technician carries out many of the basic tasks of the center. These might include processing new materials and preparing them to be placed in the collection and circulated. S/he maintains the circulation system, which means, for example, checking materials in and out of the center and following up on overdue items.

The library technician may also have responsibility for managing the serials in

Serial
A journal, newsletter, or any publication that is part of a series. Usually published several times a year at regular intervals. Each part = an issue and all the issues for one year = a volume.

the center's collection. This involves keeping track of subscriptions, recording the arrival of new issues, placing them in the indicated place for browsing, and shelving the older issues. Another major task, key to the smooth functioning of the center, is maintaining and weeding the subject files, as well as maintaining orderly arrangement of the shelves.

In assigning duties to the technician it is important to consider the person's work experience, word processing/computer skills, education, writing and speaking skills, and their degree of comfort in taking responsibility.

It is important to provide training for the Library Technician so that s/he can perform the duties assigned.

Clerical Assistant

A clerical assistant is *essential* if the director and the library technician are to have adequate time to attend to the activities described above. Information centers generate quantities of mundane filing, re-shelving of books, stamping and labeling new books and materials, etc. This can be very time consuming. The work must be done with care and should not be left to users themselves. A misplaced document is, essentially, a lost document.

Space and Equipment

Ideally an information center is easy-to-find. It should be a readily available and accessible "first stop" in any information search. If affiliated with a larger organization, it should be open and accessible throughout the organization's business hours. In addition, it should be inviting and be housed in an attractive space of its very own.

For anyone embarking upon the creation of a center, a visit to a well-established special library or information center can be a very useful first step. Typically an information center requires the use of several rooms or one large room with separated areas. The space is subdivided to allow for work space for staff and space for clients.

Basic Considerations

It is important to keep in mind that books and boxes of paper are very heavy. The area which will hold the collection must have a floor strong enough to support this weight.

Space should be available for clients involved in:
 ✳ Individual study: this requires comfortable chairs and study carrels.
 ✳ Group work: this requires a seating area in a place where quiet conversation will not disturb others.
 ✳ Browsing: this requires accessible shelves, files and seating.
 ✳ Photocopying: this requires a machine and method of payment.
 ✳ Consultation with library staff: this requires a large desk or counter.

Space must be available for the staff to work efficiently. The staff work room should have floor space, counter space, and shelves for receiving and shipping books and other materials, and for cataloging, classification and physical processing of materials. Desks and adjustable chairs should provide a comfortable work environment.

Finally, space is required to display the collection and make it conveniently accessible to staff and clients.

Furniture, Equipment and Supplies

In addition to the furnishings needed to equip the staff and client work areas, the information center has other specialized needs. One is storage equipment. *File cabinets* are needed for organizing papers, pamphlets and reports. Lateral files with drawers that roll out laterally and can be opened clear of the file cabinet itself to provide 100% accessibility and visibility are preferable. *Bookshelves* must be durable, and "heavy-duty" to accommodate the weight of books. A unit with built in bookends from a library supplier is the most convenient.

Computers and Communications Equipment.
These will be used for multiple purposes, ranging from word processing to creating in-house database(s) to preparing bibliographies and providing clients with access to the library catalog. Either an IBM or Macintosh computer with a hard drive large enough to handle the center's workload is required. Access to equipment or a system to efficiently back up large files on a regular basis is highly desirable. If users will be permitted to search the in-house catalog, additional computers or work stations should be available for them.

Consider purchasing new equipment from a local dealer who has been in business for while, even if they are hundreds of miles away. Although low-priced catalog ads look enticing, a local dealer will often allow one to try equipment before committing to it and may even set up and test the equipment, subsequently providing service and assistance. Unless your organization can provide in-house repairs, the longer warranties and service contracts offered at purchase may be good investments.

Essential Items:
External Tape Drive or Other Back-Up System.
Establishing a back-up system for the computer is essential. Regular back-ups should be performed and off-site storage arranged. In case of computer failure, it should be relatively easy to reload data and programs if regular back-ups have been performed.

Library Management Software.
There are specialized software programs designed for libraries. These include programmed modules to meet most library/ information center needs.

Laser or High Resolution Printer.

These are used for correspondence, newsletters, preparing handouts and bibliographies, etc. An important tool for networking.

Fax/Modem.
To send and receive messages and to access the Internet; government, non-profit, and commercial databases; and various electronic bulletin boards.

Computer Supplies.
This includes items such as floppy disks, mouse pads, cleaning products for dusting equipment, etc.

Photocopy Machine.
Availability of the machine may help minimize missing copies of non-circulating materials.

Typewriter.
There are still some things a typewriter can do better than a computer. A typewriter remains a useful piece of office equipment for typing envelopes, preparing individual labels and completing forms.

Supplies for Organizing, Processing, and Repairing Materials.
Including: index cards, spine labels, book card pockets, book repair tape, self-inking stamp with the name of the information center, hanging folders for file drawers, shelving supplies (bookends, signs, shelf file boxes, etc.)

Optional or Desirable Items:
CD-ROM Workstation.
Hardware, software, and a collection of reference disks. Many commercial and most governmental databases will soon be available at reasonable costs.

Optical Scanner/Barcodes.
An enormous time-saver for larger collections that circulate.

Much of the above equipment may be available within the parent organization. This possibility should be explored before new equipment is ordered. In addition, contact your purchasing office who typically will have copies of recent catalogs and may have contractual arrangements with supply companies.

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Sources of Library Supplies, Equipment, and Furniture

Gaylord Bros.
> Box 4901, Syracuse, NY 13221-4901
> Other offices in Sanford, NC; Los Angeles, CA; Guelph, Ontario.
> Phone: 800/634-6307; Intl. 315/457-5070

Highsmith Co.
> W5527 Highway 106, P.O. Box 800, Ft. Atkinson, WI 53538
> Phone: 800/558-2110

Brodart Supply Division
> 1609 Memorial Avenue, Williamsport, PA 17705
> Phone: 800/233-8959. Fax: 800283-6087

Bro-Dart Canada:
> 109 Roy Blvd., Braneida Industrial Park, Brantford, Ontario N3T 5N3
> Phone: 519/759-4350 (no charge)

Carr McLean Co.
> Canada: 461 Horner Ave., Toronto, Ontario.
> Phone: 800/268-2138; 416/252-3371

Defense Related Marketing Services, Operations Division
> 801/399-7833 Western states
> 614/692-3131 Eastern states
> A free source of used office furniture and computers available to federal and state agencies. Ask for phone number of the Defense Reutilization Marketing Office in your state.

Suggested Reading

Christianson EB; King DE; Ahrensfeld JL. *Special Libraries: A Guide for Management. Third Edition.* Washington, DC. : Special Libraries Association, 1991. 92 pp. $25 (Members $20). ISBN 0 87111 380 5.
Helps in planning and setting goals.

Davis MFC. "Staff and Personnel" In: Katz B. *The How to Do It Manual for Small Libraries.*   New York : Neal-Schuman, 1988. pp. 71-83.

Fraley R. "The physical plant" In: Katz B. *The How to Do It Manual for Small lLbraries.*   New York : Neal-Schuman, 1988. pp. 91-101.

Freifeld R; Masyr C. *Space Planning in the Special Library.* Washington, D.C. : Special Libraries Association, 1991. 152 pp. $41 (Members 32.50) ISBN 0 87111 356 2.
Aids in estimating needs, selecting materials, choosing a floor plan, etc. Suggests space

standards. Present classic principles and modern application for planners of new facilities and library renovations.

The Librarian's Yellow Pages. P.O. Box, 179, Larchmont NY 10538. Phone: 800/235-9723. E-mail: database.carl.org@internet.
Annual serial. Free. Lists thousands of publications, products, and services for libraries and information centers. Each entry includes name, address, phone, fax, descriptive information and a topical category for the service provider. The 1995 print edition contained more than 200 pages of adds for products used by libraries. It is also available on the Internet where it is updated monthly.

Reed SG. *Small Libraries: A Handbook for Successful Management.* Jefferson, NC : McFarland & Co., Inc. Publishers, 1991. 142 pp. ISBN 0 89950 596 1.
Directed to public libraries, but some of the material is relevant to special libraries. Discusses issues in hiring; evaluating and managing employees and volunteers; building and weeding a collection; providing services; etc. Annotated references.

Sager DJ. *Small Libraries: Organization and Operation.* Fort Atkinson, WI : Highsmith Press, 1993. ISBN 0 91784 616 8. 88 pp. $10.95.
Directed to individuals with limited or no formal training in library science, the volume provides a concise introduction to the basic principles and procedures essential to most small libraries. Includes planning, ordering materials, organizing the collection, processing and lending materials and setting up an attractive an efficient facility.

Special Libraries Association. *Managing Small Special Libraries, 1992.* Washington, D.C. : SLA, 1992. Spiral Bound $20 (Members: $15) ISBN 0 87111 382 1
A kit containing recent articles about budget and fees, time management and human resources, public relations, quality, service and general management issues.

Sweeney D; Zilla K., eds. *Position Descriptions in Special Libraries, Second Edition.* Washington, D.C. : Special Libraries Association, 1992. 206p. $31.25 (Members $25). ISBN 0 87111 402 X.
Examples of more than 85 job descriptions in medical, academic and industrial libraries in addition to many other types of special libraries. Offers help on writing job descriptions and emphasizes the importance of computer skills in today's information world.